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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KJUS](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND'S FOREIGN MINISTER RESIGNS AFTER TEMPLE
CONTROVERSY

REF: A. BANGKOK 2091 (CLOUDED FUTURE)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 1978 (APPROACH TOWARD DEMONSTRATORS)

Classified By: Acting DCM Anne Casper, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Within hours of returning to Thailand from Canada, Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama held a press conference at the MFA on July 10. He briefly reviewed the Samak administration's efforts to improve Thailand's international relations, then specifically addressed the controversy surrounding the Thai-Cambodian Joint Communique on the inscription of Preah Vihear temple on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Noppadon insisted that various RTG agencies had determined that he had not acted improperly in signing the Joint Communique, and that his actions had not damaged Thai interests. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court had ruled that the signing of the Communique was unconstitutional (ref A), and Noppadon said that, to promote reconciliation and place the nation's interests above his own, he was resigning from office, effective July 14.

[1](#)2. (U) Separately, the Constitutional Court ruled on July 9 that Public Health Minister Chaiya Sasomsab had violated laws on financial disclosure, because he did not disclose within 30 days of his inauguration the significant stake his wife held in a private company. The Court's ruling retroactively terminated Chaiya's status as Public Health Minister.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The recent Constitutional Court rulings have rattled the Samak administration. It is unclear whether Prime Minister Samak might try to stabilize the situation by carrying out a broad reshuffle, or whether he will simply plug the existing holes in his cabinet and forge ahead. It is also unclear whether his opponents will be temporarily placated by Noppadon's resignation, or, like sharks smelling blood, will intensify their attacks. We would stress that, at present, the administration is trying to cope with adversity stemming from court decisions and from the parliamentary opposition, rather than from street protests, which have quieted down somewhat since their late June peak (ref B).
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